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determines the atmosphere of his daily living; when he regards the immanence of such an ideal in nature and history as the object of his will; and when he responds to its presence in the spirit of his conduct and his contemplation.

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RALPH BARTON PERRY.

DEFINITION OF RELIGION.

It is an old experience that emotional people frequently show a contempt for the labors of the intellect. The heart ever and anon rebels against the head, and feelings defy definitions. No wonder that religion and religious devotees casually exhibit a dislike for science, and mankind is only now finding out that this opposition that obtains between the two most salient features of our spiritual life is not an irreconcilable contradiction but a mere contrast.

It is for these reasons that some of the simplest notions have been declared to be undefinable and inexplicable. Human sentiment revolts against the idea that a cold and clear formula should cover all that is stirring in our inmost soul, and so it appears more satisfactory to the average sentimentalist to rest satisfied with the verdict that certain things are undefinable. Among them are mainly the words, "God," "soul," and "religion." But we ought to remember that a definition is a description of the salient features of a thing and not the thing itself. A definition helps us to understand the nature of a thing, and a definition does not contain anything that would describe its relation to our own self or its paramount importance for our life. Thus it happens that the so-called undefinable ideas are some of the simplest concepts, and their very simplicity is objectionable to one who does not understand the nature of scientific precision, and this is now and then true even of a man such as is Emerson whose words Professor Ralph Barton Perry quotes: "If I speak, I define and confine, and am less."

Professor Perry himself opens his article on "Religious Experience" with the words: "The least religious experience so is mysterious and so complex, that a moderate degree of reflection upon it tends to a sense of intellectual impotence." We might say the same of any event that takes place in this world, the simplest of all being the fall of a stone which takes place according to the well known Newtonian formulas of gravitation. Though our definition of the fall of the stone is perfect, the act itself is so complex that a real comprehension of all the details of a single instance would only go to reveal our intellectual impotence. We are capable of generalisa-

tion, i. e., to mark and describe those features which a set of events has in common, and our generalisations, because they point out the salient features, enable us to comprehend the world, but while generalisations are mere words, the real events are aglow with action. The cold formulas of science lack the life of reality and if the falling stone could think and speak, it would feel that its own case of rushing toward the ground on account of the attraction with which its mass is animated under the particular circumstances of the special event is so mysterious, so complex, so absolutely beyond any description in a scientific formula that it would scorn the idea of being subsumed with all other analogous cases under one general law.

In defining events we must not be too over-anxious to satisfy the demands of emotion. Definitions describe the salient feature of a number of events and there is no set of facts which cannot be classified, named and described.

Religion is an ideal and its emotional character is its most characteristic element. Accordingly we need not be astonished that religious minds scorn any scientific definition of religion. Nevertheless religion is as much definable as any other affair or event.

The old traditional definition of religion has been "man's union with, or relation to God." Those who would try to make a concession to polytheism, add the words "or to gods," that is to say, in general to supernatural beings who answer prayers and exercise an influence upon the world. Since we have become acquainted with atheistic religions (such as is Buddhism) or purely ethical systems (such as is Confucianism), our religious philosophers have become puzzled and have not as yet found a definition which would be broad enough to comprehend also such views as must appear irreligious to our traditional dogmatism. They have resorted either to the theory that religions which do not recognise, or ignore, the existence of God, or gods, or a supernatural world, cannot be regarded as religious in the proper sense of the term, but they recognise philosophical interpretations of God, and so they replace the definition of religion as our "union with God" by a broader term such as belief in a supernatural world order, or they define religion (with Schleiermacher) in purely subjective terms as "the feeling of absolute dependence."

The definition of religion as our union with God has proved satisfactory to religious minds only on account of the other emotional term, "God." The word "God" too has been proclaimed as undefinable for the very same reasons as the term "religion." Our notion of God is so replete with sentiment and fills us with so much

awe that we hesitate to believe it could be described in a simple formula, and when thinkers began to reject the traditional conception of God as an individual being while at the same time attempting to retain the substance of their emotional reverence for the word, they replaced it by such words as "the Infinite," "the First Cause," "the Eternal," "the Highest Being," etc., but for all that the words God and Religion, whatever their import for our feelings may be, are and will remain very simple ideas.

God, whatever notion of divinity man may have had has been from the beginning and is still an idea of moral significance to everyone who uses the word and believes in the existence of a God. God to the savage as well as to the Christian apologetic of the twentieth century is that power which forces upon man a definite line of conduct and every believer in God considers that, the duty of his life which in his opinion he trusts to be the will of his God.

When Jephtha, the judge of Israel, thought that Yahveh demanded of him the sacrifice of his daughter as a burnt offering, he obeyed with a bleeding heart. From the standpoint of his belief, his act was moral for it was according to his religion and his conception of God.

Ximenes, one of the most uncompromising inquisitors of Spain, had thousands of victims burned at the stake, and yet, it is said, that he was so tender hearted that he could not bear the groans and cries of the suspected heretics whom he ordered to be tortured on the rack. He appears to us as a villain and a hard hearted scoundrel, but the truth is that, from the standpoint of his conscience, his infamous *autos da fé* were truly moral acts which with logical necessity were derived from his conception of God. As was his religion so was his morality. We can not blame him, we must blame his religion. From the higher standpoint of a modern God conception his acts were immoral, if judged by present standards, and their badness only proves how important it is for us to have the right kind of religion.

Judging from all instances of the different deities that exercise their influence upon human hearts I have come to the conclusion that the best definition of God in a religious sense would be to say that God is that something in a power beyond our control which determines our actions, or in other words, "God is the highest authority for moral conduct." Whether or not this authority for moral conduct be conceived as an individual being, natural or supernatural, as a general idea, or as a law of nature, or as a mysterious power is another question which will prove of importance whenever we in-

vestigate the God conceptions of the several religions or of different philosophers. The truth remains that the common feature of all God conceptions is that God represents the ultimate authority for our actions.

Religion refers to the entire man; it covers his whole life, intellectual, emotional and practical. The roots of our religion lie deeply buried in our world conception and therewith religion permeates our intellect, our sentiments and our will. It resides in the head, it pulsates in the heart, it guides the hand. It appears as dogma, as the tenor that gives a definite character to our aspirations; as worship, ritual and prayer; as sacrifice, devotion and rule of conduct. Further it is the quintessence of our hopes and our dreams and the guiding star and mariner's compass on our voyage through life.

The triple nature of religion as being at once the dominant of the intellect, of the emotions and of the will, is best expressed in the word "conviction," for by "conviction" we understand an idea that is backed by sentiment and serves as a regulator of conduct. Accordingly, religion is a world-conception that has become our conviction.

Religion is different in different ages, under different conditions, in different temperaments, and in people of different characters. Although it always affects the whole man, it is to the intellectualist mainly a doctrine; to the sentimental, mainly a feeling ("Gefühl ist alles," says Faust); to the moralist, mainly a rule of action; to the man of practical life, mainly endeavor; to the traditionalist, mainly a matter of observances; to the pietist, mainly devotion, etc. All these phenomena are characteristic of religion, but none of them exhausts its nature completely.

It becomes obvious that religion is the natural product of human nature. Wherever there are rational beings who can form a systematic view of the world, religion will inevitably develop and religion will be of the most varied character, savage or civilized, vulgar or noble, superstitious or lofty and pure, according to circumstances and the nature of the people.

Purely intellectual ideas are scientific; they may be true or, if not exactly true, we may be convinced of their truth. They are not religious, but they may become religious. An idea becomes religious as soon as it becomes an authoritative truth, a truth to mind which we deem to be a duty. Thus the doctrine of evolution has become a religious tenet to many by implying the duty of being progressive and working for the advance of the human race.

In brief, religion covers man's relation to the entirety of existence. The characteristic feature of religion is conviction, and its contents a world conception which serves for the regulation of conduct.

This definition of religion is as broad as it sweeping; it covers not only the theistic faith, but also the atheistic religions, such as Buddhism and Confucianism, and also all philosophies, for religion is the philosophy of historical movements, while a philosophy is the religion of an individual thinker. Our definition includes all serious convictions, even those which pride themselves on being irreligious. Irreligion, according to our definition would alone that man be who had no rule of conduct, no maxim according to which he could regulate his life, and thus the irreligious man would practically be identical with the thoughtless man, the man without convictions, without principles, who lives only for the present moment, who never thinks of the future or the past and who, animal-like, only satisfies the immediate impulses of his instincts.

By offering this comparatively simple definition of religion we do not mean to describe all the awe and reverence which the religious man cherishes for his God, for the authority of his conduct, for his ideals. That is indescribable, as much so as any reality in its peculiar idiosyncracy defies definition, but our definition, it is to be hoped, will prove sufficient for scientific purposes, as a satisfactory generalisation of all religious phenomena.

P. C.

THE BASLE CONGRESS FOR THE HISTORY OF RELIGION.

The Parliament of Religions which was convened at Chicago in 1893 could not be repeated in Paris because in France the principle of a separation of church and state is interpreted in such a way as to allow the official authorities to do nothing whatever in the line of religion. Accordingly a religious parliament of any character could not have been tolerated on the Exhibition grounds at Paris; but scientific congresses were quite in order, and so there was no opposition to a historical treatment of religion. Accordingly those who advocated a religious parliament proposed to have the next best possible, which was a congress of scholars who represented not churches or congregations but a scientific inquiry into the history of religion. Thus it came about that a congress for the history of religion was held at the Paris Exposition.

The first Congress of the History of Religion was opened by